

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LISBON 06333 281148Z

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4743

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DEPT PLEASE ALSO PASS AMCONSUL LUANDA FOR INFO

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PO

SUBJ: PORTUGUESE ARMS IN ANGOLA

REF: (A) STATE 246921; (B) LUANDA 1619

1. DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY LOWENSTEIN AND I CALLED ON
MINISTER OF COOPERATION VITOR CRESPO OCTOBER 27. SINCE
CRESPO HAS DIRECT RESPONSIBILITY FOR ANGOLAN DECOLONIZATION
I ASKED IF HE WAS THE PROPER MAN TO DISCUSS THE QUESTION OF
ARMS WITHDRAWAL. HE SAID HE WAS AND INDICATED HE WAS AWARE
OF OUR PREVIOUS DEMARCHE.

2. LOWENSTEIN AND I MADE THE POINTS CONTAINED IN REFTEL (A).
I REMINDED CRESPO OF COMMITMENTS WE HAD BEEN GIVEN BY BOTH
PRIME MINISTER AND FOREIGN MINISTER THAT EVERY POSSIBLE ACTION
WOULD BE TAKEN TO WITHDRAW EQUIPMENT OR NEUTRALIZE IT. CRESPO
REAFFIRMED THAT GOP HAD TAKEN A FORMAL DECISION THAT IT WOULD
NOT LEAVE BEHIND ANY EQUIPMENT THAT "WOULD CHANGE THE
BALANCE IN THE WAR THAT WAS PRESENTLY GOING ON." SOME EQUIPMENT,
HOWEVER, WAS SIMPLY IMPOSSIBLE TO REMOVE. HE PROVIDED THE
FOLLOWING ACCOUNTING:

(A) RIFLES. THERE WERE A NUMBER OF RIFLES LEFT IN
ARMORIES NOT CONTROLLED BY THE GOP. HOWEVER THE BOLTS HAD
BEEN REMOVED.

(B) AIRCRAFT. APPROXIMATELY 50 SMALL AIRCRAFT WOULD BE
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PAGE 02 LISBON 06333 281148Z

LEFT BEHIND. THESE AIRCRAFT WERE NOT USEFUL FOR PURPOSES OF

WAR. THEIR ONLY CONCEIVABLE USE WOULD BE FOR OBSERVATION. RIGHT NOW THEY WERE UNSERVICEABLE, BUT GOP COULD NOT SAY THEY COULD NEVER BE FLOWN. WITH AN OVERHAUL THEY COULD BE MADE SERVICEABLE, BUT THERE WAS NO CAPACITY IN ANGOLA TO OVERHAUL THEM. HENCE GOP DID NOT THINK LEAVING THEM BEHIND WOULD AFFECT THE TIDE OF BATTLE.

(C) ARTILLERY: ALL ARTILLERY WOULD BE REMOVED. THE GOP HAS THE CAPACITY TO DO THIS. IF IT DOES TURN OUT TO BE NECESSARY TO LEAVE ANYTHING BEHIND IT WILL BE RENDERED UNSERVICEABLE.

(D) AMMUNITION. ALL AMMUNITION IS EITHER BEING DESTROYED OR DROPPED INTO THE SEA.

(E) VESSELS. THE GOP HAD FOUND IT IMPOSSIBLE TO REMOVE SOME SMALL SHIPS WHICH WERE NOT IN SEAWORTHY CONDITION. FIVE OF THESE OF LESS THAN 350 TONS WERE IN OPERATION. THE LARGEST GUNS THEY HAVE ARE 20 MILLIMETERS, AND SHIPS ARE SUFFICIENT ONLY FOR COASTAL PATROL PURPOSES. THESE SHIPS HAVE ALREADY BEEN TURNED OVER TO THE DEPARTMENT THAT RUNS THE MERCHANT MARINE SERVICE.

3. I ASKED IF TURNING THE SHIPS OVER TO THE MERCHANT MARINE SERVICE WAS NOT THE EQUIVALENT OF TURNING THEM OVER TO THE MPLA. CRESPO REPLIED THAT THEY HAD THOUGHT OF PUTTING ONE SHIP IN EACH HARBOR. WE HAD TO RECOGNIZE THAT THESE WERE VERY SMALL SHIPS, THAT WOULD NOT BE OF MILITARY VALUE. LOWENSTEIN SAID THEY COULD BE OF VALUE IN TRANSPORTING TROOPS. CRESPO ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THEY MIGHT HAVE SOME CAPACITY IN THIS AREA BUT IT WOULD BE NEGIGLIBLE FROM A MILITARY POINT OF VIEW. WHEN WE PRESSED HIM AGAIN ON RENDERING THEM UNSERVICEABLE, HE ARGUED THAT THEY WERE IN SUCH BAD CONDITION THAT THEY WERE IN EFFECT UNSERVICEABLE RIGHT NOW. HE RETURNED TO GOP POLICY OF NOT LEAVING BEHIND ANY MATERIEL THAT WOULD INFLUENCE THE OUTCOME OF THE STRUGGLE AND SAID THESE SHIPS ARE SO SMALL AND IN SUCH CONDITION THAT LEAVING THEM BEHIND DOES NOT VIOLATE THEIR POLICY.

4. SINCE WE PUSHED CRESPO VERY HARD AND HE CONTINUED TO INSIST THAT THE SHIPS WERE OF NEGIGLIBLE IMPORTANCE I TOLD HIM I WOULD REPORT THIS TO MY GOVERNMENT. I SUGGEST OUR CONSUL GENERAL IN ANGOLA ATTEMPT TO OBTAIN MORE DETAILS ON CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 LISBON 06333 281148Z

THE NATURE OF THE SHIPS AND ASSESS THEIR MILITARY IMPORTANCE. I NOTE THAT CRESPO CONTINUED TO TALK ABOUT FIVE SHIPS RATHER THAN THE 25 MENTIONED BY CARDOSO (REFTEL (B)).
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